

**SUMMARY OF THE  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
MAY 24, 2000**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, May 24, 2000, at 1 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The first hour of the meeting was led by its chair, Mr. William Ingersoll of the United States Navy. The second hour was led by Mr. R. Wayne Davis of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. A list of action items resulting from this meeting is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purposes of the meeting were to discuss the committee's agenda for the upcoming Sixth NELAC Annual Meeting (NELAC VI) and to discuss technical training for NELAC assessors.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Following an informal discussion of potential replacements for a voting member whose term on the committee will expire this year, the meeting was called to order by Mr. Ingersoll. It was noted that proposed changes to the Standard have been posted on the NELAC web site. Discussion then turned to the committee's agenda for the Sixth NELAC Annual Meeting (NELAC VI).

**AGENDA FOR NELAC VI**

Mr. Ingersoll noted that the first hour of the On-site Assessment Committee's session at NELAC VI will address the pilot basic assessor training course and will be led by Ms. Marlene Moore. Following discussion of basic assessor training, the committee will present the opinion paper on technical training drafted by Mr. Davis and Ms. Rosanna Buhl. Members of the committee noted that there are still a few wordsmithing issues to be addressed before the opinion paper is ready for presentation to the conference. Ms. Buhl indicated that she will continue to work on the paper and hopes to finish in time to provide it to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for approval and inclusion in attendee packets.

**TECHNICAL TRAINING**

The committee engaged in considerable discussion of the issue of technical training for NELAC assessors. Mr. Richard Sheibley is preparing a list of critical elements common to technical training courses. It was agreed that there already exist a number of training courses that would suffice with a few minor adjustments to include the critical elements. Committee members offered as an example an Inductively Coupled Plasma/Mass Spectrometry (ICP/MS) course presented by a manufacturer. One committee member expressed the opinion that such a course might provide adequate technical background but would not cover the finer points of auditing that methodology. Another example given was the EPA drinking water course, which committee members noted doesn't spend a considerable amount of time on any one methodology but covers key points of methodology, potential pitfalls, and things of which an assessor must be aware. A committee member raised the question of whether the NELAC technical training courses will require some previous technical training or technical experience.

It was noted that a shorter course would be sufficient for an assessor who has a lot of technical experience. In subsequent discussion, committee members were in agreement that they are looking for feedback from the floor at NELAC VI on how to proceed with technical training. There was moderate discussion of proposed general objectives or critical elements for technical training courses, including record keeping, instrumentation, software, and general quality control. Using a dioxin analysis method as an example, a committee member questioned whether a training course can capture critical elements such that people who do not have detailed experience can be taught to watch for certain details. In response, it was noted that the Accrediting Authority has the responsibility to ensure that technical training courses meet NELAC requirements.

It was noted that the purpose of a NELAC assessment is not to uncover laboratory fraud but to verify that a laboratory is compliant with mandated methods and the NELAC Standards. It was also noted that this purpose blurs when the people who perform NELAC assessments are also state auditors. A NELAC assessment may begin the process for further investigation. Committee members expressed the belief that an assessor must have the knowledge and ability to pick up on questionable laboratory practices or deviations from the norm. A committee member asked what would happen if a NELAC assessor noted something questionable in a routine NELAC assessment and then returned to the laboratory as a state inspector to investigate the questionable activities under the auspices of the state. In response, it was noted that an assessor is required to follow up under the NELAC Standards if the assessor perceives an immediate threat to public health and safety. Such a follow-up is an extreme action.

Concluding the discussion of this issue, the committee decided to ask Mr. Ingersoll to compile the list of critical elements he has received and to distribute that list to committee members. Committee members were requested to submit comments and additions to Mr. Ingersoll by Friday, June 2, for discussion at the next regularly scheduled teleconference.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Jack Hall reminded the committee that he has drafted language to refer to a “basic training standard.” Mr. Hall noted that he modified the term to “basic assessor training standard.” The committee will discuss this language at the next regularly schedule teleconference.

## **CONCLUSION**

The allotted time for the teleconference having expired, Mr. Davis reminded participants that the committee’s next teleconference is scheduled for June 7, 2000. The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m. EDT.

**ACTION ITEMS  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
MAY 24, 2000**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Member</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
1.	Committee to present summary of pilot NELAC Assessor Training Course.	M. Moore	NELAC VI
2.	Committee to submit comments on technical training position paper to Ms. Buhl.	All	6/2/00
3.	Committee to wordsmith technical training position paper.	R. Buhl	6/7/00
4.	Committee to prepare draft language outlining critical elements for technical training courses.	R. Sheibley, W. Ingersoll	6/2/00
5.	Committee to submit comments on critical elements to Mr. Ingersoll.	All	6/2/00
6.	Committee to discuss/wordsmith "basic assessor training standard" language drafted and distributed by Mr. Hall.	All	6/7/00

**PARTICIPANTS  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
MAY 24, 2000**

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